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ABSTRACT

This document is a report on the 2001 Community Perception Survey administered by Mt. San Antonio College (SAC) (California). The survey gathered public perception data of SAC services and programs. The survey was mailed to 773 service area community leaders; 160 (21%) responded. Survey results showed that: (1) 70% had knowledge of SAC programs and services; (2) 52% rated SAC as good or excellent in providing information to the community; (3) 64% had visited, taken a class, or attended an event on campus; (4) 61% thought the college should improve technology training and provide more online classes; and (5) 77% expressed that they would likely or very likely support a bond measure to upgrade or renovate the college. Overall, 67% of the respondents expressed that SAC has an excellent reputation. The response rate is relatively small and includes only individuals on select college mailing lists. The perceptions and opinions of average citizens in the community was not collected or measured. The report indicates that the college must find ways to communicate, educate, and articulate its programs, services, and needs to the general public. The report includes tables that compare 2001 findings with previous SAC public opinion telephone survey results, along with 2000 statewide public opinion survey results. Appendix contains the survey instrument. (MKF)

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Community Perception Survey - 2001

May 17, 2001

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REPORT SUMMARY

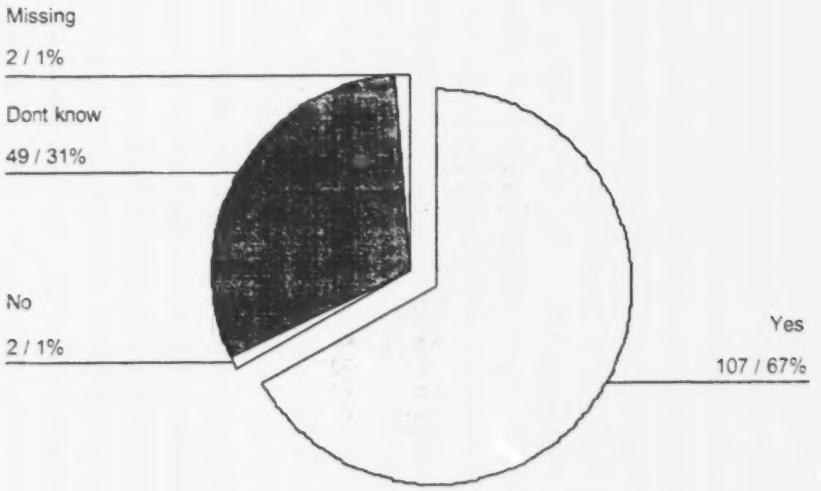
As part of the Program Review process, and to meet Mt. San Antonio College's goals to make data driven decisions, a Community Perception Survey was mailed to 773 community leaders in April 2001 (see Appendix A). Of the surveys mailed, 160 surveys were returned or 21 percent[1]. The purpose of the survey was to collect perception data about Mt. SAC from community leaders.

Questions on the survey ranged from public perception on Mt. SAC's collateral material to perceptions about public education. Three questions were replicated from the 2000 California Community College Survey conducted by Price Research and based on telephone calls to 1,625 people. Additionally, one question related to a future bond measure was asked. Other questions were taken from a Mt. SAC Public Perception Survey conducted in July 2000.

Results from the survey revealed:

- The quality and frequency of promotional materials received by those surveyed were rated very high.
- Some 70% had knowledge about Mt. SAC programs and services.
- 57% rated good to excellent the College's efforts to inform the community of its needs.
- Many visited the campus during the past year to attend class, a cultural event, or special event.
- More than 50% of those responding or their family members attended Mt. SAC.
- Over 50% feel the College is under-funded.
- 78% would support a third bond measure effort.
- 67% think Mt. SAC has an excellent state and national reputation (see pie chart[NB])

Mt. SAC has an excellent state and national reputation



[1] The response rate was 21% (160 / 773), which translates into a margin of error of +/-8% with a 95% confidence interval. Considering the major findings were not ambiguous, this margin of error is not of great concern. Also, comparison of data from this study to that from other internal and external studies typically yielded similar findings indicating that the current margin of error is not necessarily having a strong impact on our findings.

[NB] Results for all pie charts list the "number of respondents/ percentage of respondents (e.g., 107/67%). The "/" is used only to separate these two numbers.

BENEFITS OF THE PROJECT

The project allows us to "take the pulse" of the community, related to their perception of Mt. San Antonio College. By asking questions from past surveys in key areas, we can monitor changes in perception. We can also use the results to measure the success of the collateral material we publish and to make any modifications necessary.

A direct mail piece, even unanswered, is a connection with the community. Reading and answering the survey also allows us to plant key messages with the public related to our quality initiatives and our comprehensive mission.

Questions related to external national and state surveys allow us to test local perceptions against other, larger, data sets. For example, people statewide and locally value a college education but feel families do not save enough to pay for their children to attend college.

DATA COLLECTION

The Institutional Advancement Office mailed a packet of information in March to the survey population of community leaders. The packet included a letter from President Feddersen, the survey, and a postage paid return envelope (see Appendix A). The letter indicated that the study was a way to seek quality improvement of college programs. The survey contained 40 questions and a section for additional narrative comments. Surveys were mailed back to the Research and Institutional Effectiveness Office for analysis.

Database

The population included local businesses, legislators, community members, city council representatives, city managers, media representatives, representatives from Mt. SAC's Program Advisory Committees, local superintendents of school districts and their board members, assistant superintendents, high school counselors, donors, Mt. SAC foundation directors, city economic or redevelopment directors, executive directors and presidents of local chambers of commerce, high school liaisons with Mt. SAC, and local university representatives.

Demographics

The following is a demographic profile of the respondents:

- Majority had lived in the community for five or more years
- Almost 60% live within the Mt. SAC district
- 68% were White, 17% were Hispanic/Latino
- 24% held a school district administration position (Appendix C)

RESULTS

Overall, the survey revealed that the community views Mt. SAC in a positive light.

Four questions related to what programs the College should focus on in the next 20 years were asked. These questions also were part of

Mt. SAC's 2000 Community Survey[2]. The comparison results are as follows:

Should Mt. SAC focus on these in the next 20 years? (Only Strongly Agree responses)	2000[2] (n=60)	2001 (n=160)
Prepare students for proficiency with new technology	85%	65%
Find new ways to provide financial resources needed to maintain state-of-the-art college facilities	55%	46%
Provide new and updated buildings, state-of-the-art equipment and new teaching methods	48%	36%
Increase College's outreach to the community in educational, cultural, recreational, and social programs	30%	43%

The survey also included one question from a statewide survey conducted in 2000 by Price Research for the California Community Colleges[3]. In both the Price Survey and the current one, over 50% believe the College system is under-funded (see table)

Based on what you know or what you have heard compared to other state educational systems, would you say that the college system is… (1) under-funded, (2) adequately funded, or (3) over-funded	
California State Survey[3]	**Mt. SAC Community Perception 2001**
54% say it is under-funded	58% say it is under-funded

[2] Office of Institutional Advancement (May, 2000). ***The Results of a Community Survey***. Mt. San Antonio College, Walnut, CA: Author.

[3] Price Research (2000). ***California Community Colleges: 2000 Random Survey.*** The California Community College Chancellor's Office Systemwide Marketing Task Force.

Marketing

Other results from the survey indicated the following:

- 92% thought the quality of Mt. SAC's publications were good to excellent
- 79% thought that the frequency in which they received materials from Mt. SAC was good to excellent
- 62% thought the College's marketing efforts, when compared to other Colleges in the area, was good to excellent
- 52% thought the coverage of Mt. SAC activities in the local media was good to excellent
- 38% thought the visibility of the staff at the commu... civic functions in their town was good to excellent

Knowledge of Mt. SAC

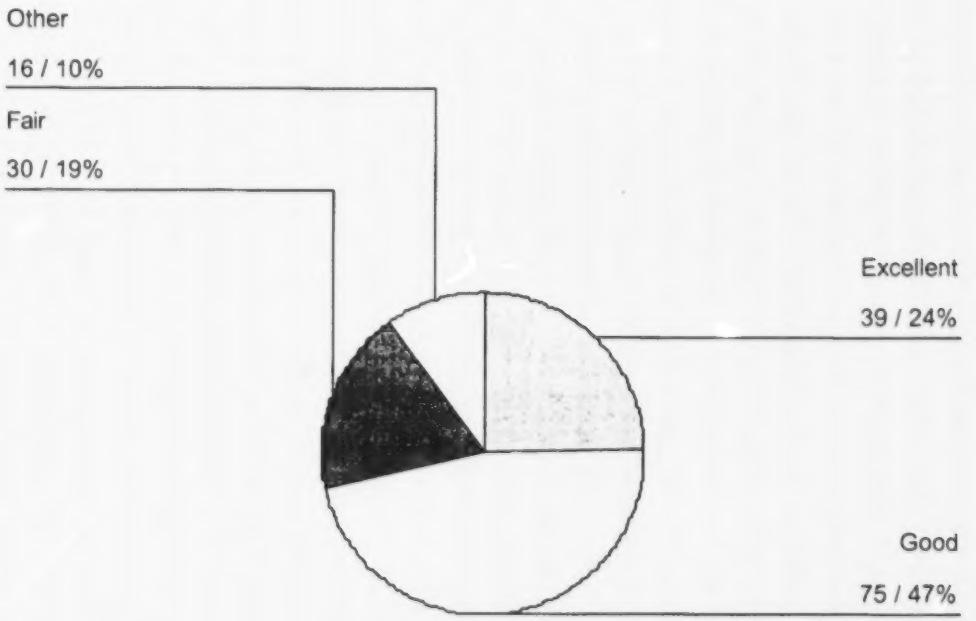
Respondents indicated, by 67%, that Mt. SAC has an excellent state and national reputation (see pie chart on page 3).

The following pie charts (see next two pages), indicate the level of knowledge they have of Mt. SAC with respect to its:

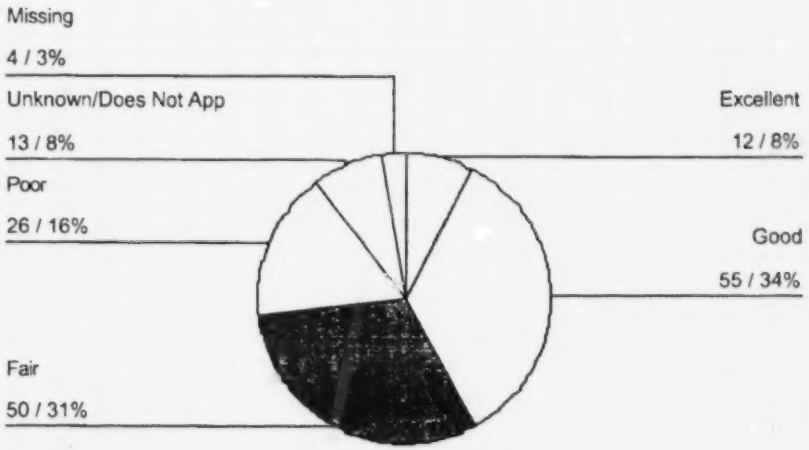
- Programs/services,
- Partnerships with business and industry and
- Partnerships with other educational providers.

Their level of knowledge was highest with program/services that Mt. SAC offers – representing a 71% good to excellent knowledge level. Their level of knowledge with regards to other partnerships was somewhat less – 42 to 47% indicated that their level of knowledge was good to excellent with respect to Mt. SAC's partnerships with business and industry as well as other educational providers.

Knowledge you have about Mt. SAC and its programs/services.



Knowledge you have about Mt. SAC partnerships with business and industry



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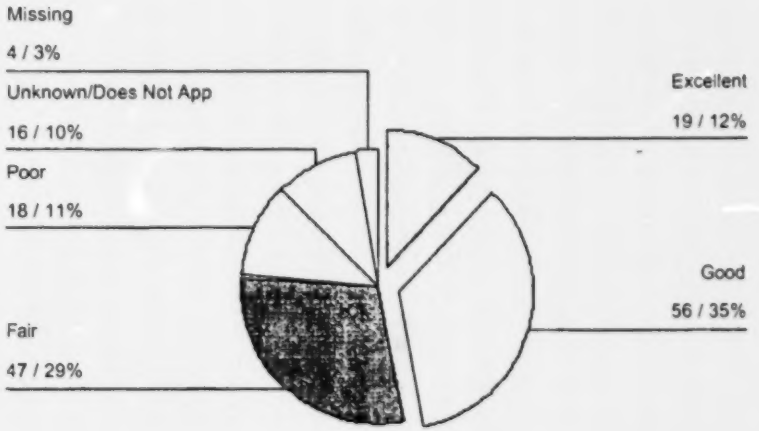
Knowledge you have about Mt. SAC partnerships with other educational providers



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Visiting Mt. SAC

Respondents indicated that they had visited Mt. SAC in a number of different ways and for different reasons:

- 39% indicated that they had visited the College's web site
- 64% had visited the campus in 1999-2000 to attend an event or class
- Of those who visited the campus for an event, 37% did so for a cultural outing (see Appendix B).

Perspectives on Education

Respondents were asked three questions related to their perspective on different aspects of education.

- We should not allow the price of a college education to keep students who are qualified and motivated to go to college from doing so. (79% strongly agree)
- A college education has become as important as a high school diploma used to be. (72% strongly agree)
- Most families today do a good job of saving for their children's college education. (78% strongly DISagree to DISagree)

The above same questions were asked in a national study by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education (NCPPHE). The NCPPPHE results are comparable to findings from the present study (see table).

QUESTION	2000 NCPPHE[4] National (n=1015)	2000 NCPPHE[4] California (n=503)	2001 Survey (n=160)
Price of education (strongly agree)	78%	73%	79%
College important as high school (strongly agree)	68%	63%	72%
Saving for education (strongly DISagree to DISagree)	65%	64%	78%

Connection with the College

Some respondents had attended the College or had family members who had or would be attending the College:

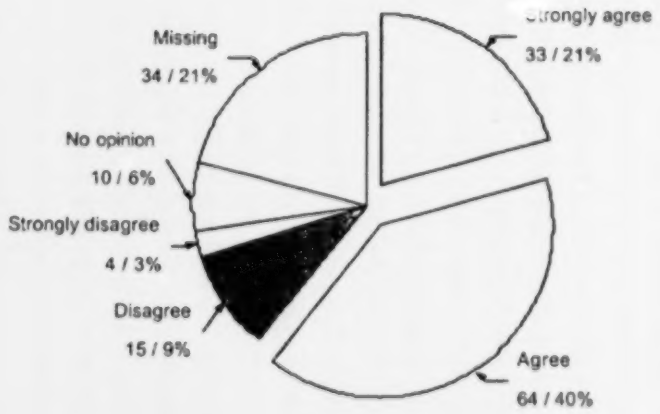
- 58% said that themselves or their family members had attended the college and
- Within the next five years:
  - Respondents indicated that themselves or members of their family would attend Mt. SAC for:
    - Credit courses (30%)
    - Lifelong learning (non-credit) courses (30%)
  - 52% indicated that either themselves or a family member would attend Mt. SAC for cultural arts events/activities

[4] National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education (2000). ***Great Expectations: How Californians View Higher Education***. San Jose, California: Author.

Thinking in the Future

Over the next 20 years, 61% of the respondents thought that it is important for Mt. SAC to provide more on-line classes (see pie chart).

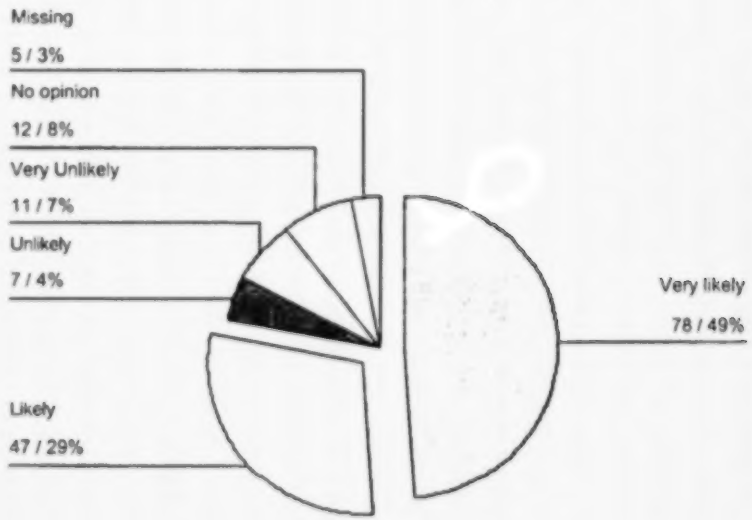
Important: Providing more on-line classes



Bond

Respondents were asked one question related to a bond measure. They were asked if they would support a bond measure for Mt. SAC. Over 77% indicated that it was very likely or likely that they would support a bond measure (see pie chart). The specific wording of the question was, "Given that Mt. SAC needs to accommodate an additional 7,000 credit students in the next 10 years, how likely would you be to support a local bond measure to renovate, upgrade and provide new classrooms and learning support space?"

Would you support a bond measure for Mt. SAC?



COMMUNITY PERCEPTION HISTORY

Two Mt. SAC Public Perception Surveys were completed in 2000, one was a telemarketing survey of 297 high propensity voters conducted in February and March of 2000[6], and the other was a paper survey to 250 area residents conducted in April-May of 2000[2]. In 1997, a telephone survey was conducted by John Fairbank to assess voter support for Mt. SAC's bond effort. Some of the questions from these surveys were used in the current study. The comparisons are as follows:

QUESTION	1997 Voter Survey[5] (n= 600) Telemarketing	2000 Survey[6] (n = 297) Telemarketing	2001 Survey (n = 160) Mailed Survey
Would support another bond measure	69%	72%	78%
Facilities need upgrading	30%	48%	+ (see footnote on next page)
No public or community relations issues apparent	+ (see footnote on next page)	66%	65%[7]
Provides an affordable education[8]	+	67	93%*
Is a good place to get an education[8]	+	71	96%*
Has outstanding athletic programs[8]	+	16%	56%*
Has excellent teachers[8]	+	41%	64%*
Focus on quality[8]	+	34%	84%*
Has the right programs to serve the community	+	68%	73%*[9]

[5] Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates (1997). ***Mt. San Antonio College voter opinion telephone survey.*** Mt. San Antonio College, Walnut, CA.

[6] Office of Institutional Advancement (March 2000). ***A Report on a Telemarketing Pilot Study***. Mt. San Antonio College, Walnut, CA.

[7] Wording was different in 2001: Do you think that there are any major public relations or community relation issues facing the College at this time?

[8] Note: In 2001, each question was posed separately, while in 2000, respondents were asked to choose from only three of these statements.

* Note: Majority of remaining responses were "Don't know".

+ Questions related to these topics were asked in a different manner or not asked. Therefore, a comparison is not possible.

[9] Wording in 2001 was different, "Mt. SAC is responsive to community needs."

NARRATIVE COMMENTS

Respondents were also asked: *"Do you think there are any major public relations or community issues facing the College at this time? If yes, please elaborate."* Some 41 people listed a response. The four themes, which emerged from the comments, fell into these categories:

1. Convince people as to why you need support for a bond. (19 responses)
2. The communities farthest from the College don't know Mt. SAC. (5 responses)
3. The College should partner with other educational entities. (5 responses)
4. The college should address diversity issues. (4 responses)

Respondents were also provided an opportunity to make comments or recommendations for improving programs and services at Mt. SAC. Some 20 people made comments. Some of the most interesting included:

- *"Website needs to be updated."*
- *"Absolutely more classrooms. Classes fill quickly leaving many without options."*
- *"I value the education I got there and I always recommend the college to anyone."*
- *"Some first time students have trouble getting CSU, UC requirement classes."*
- *"I hope Mt. SAC will prove to the rest of the community colleges that they are the flagship regarding recycling, reusing, and source reduction."*
- *"Mt. SAC is one of the best community colleges in the state with a whole variety of offerings."*
- *"Employees at my workplace need interactive online courses."*

LIMITATIONS

As with every study, some limitations exist. We acknowledge that:

- The survey was sent to groups on our mailing list. These people receive the Campus Connection and Update material. They have more knowledge about the College than the average citizen. Some of the Program Advisory Committee members who were part of the pool would have subject matter expertise on what we do for students in various programs.
- Generally, people with strong positive or negative feelings respond to a survey. We have no data on the 613 people who chose not to respond.
- The sample is small, but statistically valid.
- There was only one question related to the bond measure and it did not take into account California's current economic situation.
- Almost 60% of the respondents live within the District.
- The sample included decision makers and leaders of the community. Few "average citizens" were part of the pool.

COMMENTS

Overall, leaders and decision makers in the College district view Mt. San Antonio College in a positive light. It is apparent that there is positive support in the community for another bond attempt because our facilities needs have been articulated to the leaders and decision makers.

Capstone questions, much like the bond question, tend to mask a focus response. For example, the Fairbanks' study asked the bond questions in at least three different ways both before and after educating the respondent on our needs. It is unknown whether respondents would have answered in the same way if other elements were included in the survey, such as the energy crisis, high oil prices, and the general California economic situation.

The critical question will be how to educate the average voter that our facility needs are real.

This report will be shared with the Institutional Marketing Committee to address any issues that might be helpful for marketing the college. The study will be posted on the web site of the Office of Research and Institutional Effectiveness. Please visit http://www.mtsac.edu/college/institutional/research

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Cover Letter and Community Perception Survey

March 2001

Dear Friend of Mt. SAC:

Mt. San Antonio College continuously seeks to improve the quality of its programs and services for the people of the Walnut, San Gabriel and Pomona Valleys. As a community leader, your views about the College are critically important as we seek to improve what we do. **That is why I am asking you to complete the enclosed Community Perception Survey concerning Mt. San Antonio College**. In addition to providing us valuable feedback on the way we communicate with the public, we are interested in knowing your perception of higher education.

The survey will take no more than five minutes of your time. **A postage paid envelope is enclosed for your convenience**. I hope you will complete and return the survey to us by **April 12, 2001** so that we may include your perceptions of how we serve your community in our final report.

Finally, I would like to encourage you to check out our new and expanded web site at www.mtsac.edu for information on our programs, services, cultural arts series, and other activities. I would also like to invite you to visit Mt. San Antonio College at any time. Tours of the campus or particular programs may be arranged by calling Jamaika Fowler at (909) 594-5611 ext. 5682.

Thank you for your assistance and continuing support. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Bill Feddersen, Ed.D.
President

Encs.

Mt. San Antonio College
Community Perception Survey

INSTRUCTIONS

In an effort to build a strong relationship with the communities Mt. SAC serves, improve the services we provide, and to gather important information for program review and planning, Mt. SAC asks for your assistance in completing this survey. Your responses are **IMPORTANT**and will be kept **CONFIDENTIAL** If you have any questions about this survey, please contact the Institutional Advancement Office at (909) 594-5611, x4259. Please return the survey by April 12, 2001. Thank you for your assistance.

The survey can be completed in *DARK* PEN or PENCIL. Please mark the circles fully as shown:

Like This ☐	**NOT** Like these ⊗ ◕ ∅

PERSONAL INFORMATION

What is the zip code where you live?

_____

How long have you lived in the community?

- 0 – 1 years ☐
- 2 – 3 years ☐
- 4 – 5 years ☐
- More than 5 years ☐

Please indicate your community position:
(Mark ALL that apply.)

- City official (elected or employed) ☐
- Chamber member ☐
- Mt. SAC Foundation Director ☐
- Local business owner/CEO ☐
- Mt. SAC Advisory Committee member ☐
- School District Administration ☐
- Board Member ☐
- Media ☐
- Legislator ☐
- Other (please state)_____

What is your race/ethnicity? (Note that these are "new" categories as defined by the U.S. government.)

- American Indian or Alaska Native ☐
- Asian ☐
- Black or African American ☐
- Spanish, Hispanic or Latino ☐
- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander ☐
- White ☐
- Other ☐

SURVEY QUESTIONS

Please rate the following aspects of the College's communications.	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Unknown or Does Not Apply
Quality of Mt. SAC's publications (schedules, catalogs, brochures, newsletters).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Frequency of the materials you receive from the College.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Coverage of Mt. SAC activities in the local media.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Visibility of College staff at community/civic functions in your town.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Knowledge you have about Mt. SAC and its programs/services.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Knowledge you have about Mt. SAC partnerships with business and industry.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Please rate the following aspects of the College's communications.	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Unknown or Does Not Apply
Knowledge you have about Mt. SAC partnerships with other educational providers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
College's efforts to inform the community of its needs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
College's marketing efforts compared to other colleges in the area.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Please answer the following general questions.	Yes	No	Unable
Have you ever visited Mt. SAC's website--www.mtsac.edu?	☐	☐	☐
Did you visit the campus in 1999-2000 to attend an event or class?	☐	☐	☐
If YES to the above question, was the event(s) one (or more) of the following:			
Cultural Arts	☐	☐	☐
Sports	☐	☐	☐
Class	☐	☐	☐
Other (please specify) _____	☐	☐	☐

Have you or any member of your family ever attended Mt. SAC classes?	
Yes	☐
No	☐

Please respond to the following statements regarding your attitudes toward higher education.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
We should not allow the price of a college education to keep students who are qualified and motivated to go to college from doing so.	☐	☐	☐	☐
A college education has become as important as a high school diploma used to be.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Most families today do a good job of saving for their children's college education.	☐	☐	☐	☐

Based on either what you know or what you have heard, compared to other state education systems, would you say that California's public community college system is...	
Under-funded	☐
Adequately funded	☐
Over-funded	☐

What programs or projects do you feel will be the most important for Mt. SAC to consider over the next 20 years?	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No opinion
Preparing students for proficiency with new technology.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Increasing the College's outreach to the community in educational, and workforce training programs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Providing new and updated buildings with state-of-the-art equipment.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Providing more on-line classes.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

What programs or projects do you feel will be the most important for Mt. SAC to consider over the next 20 years?	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No opinion
Finding new ways to provide the financial resources needed to maintain state-of-the-art college facilities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Based on what you know or have heard, would you say that....	Yes	No	Don't Know
Mt. SAC is a good place to get an education.	☐	☐	☐
Mt. SAC provides affordable education	☐	☐	☐
Mt. SAC has outstanding athletic programs.	☐	☐	☐
Mt. SAC focuses on quality.	☐	☐	☐
Mt. SAC has excellent teachers.	☐	☐	☐
Mt. SAC is responsive to community needs.	☐	☐	☐
Mt. SAC has an excellent state and national reputation.	☐	☐	☐

Within the next five years, do you think that you and/or members of your family would attend Mt. SAC for...

Lifelong learning (non-credit) courses ☐

Credit courses ☐

Cultural Arts Events/Activities ☐

None of the above ☐

Do you think that there are any major public relations or community relation issues facing the College at this time?

Yes ☐

No ☐

If you Marked "yes" to the previous question, please elaborate.

_____

_____

_____

Please answer the following general questions.	Very Likely	Likely	Unlikely	Very Unlikely	No opinion
Given that Mt. SAC needs to accommodate an additional 7,000 credit students in the next 10 years, how likely would you be to support a local bond measure to renovate, upgrade and provide new classrooms and learning support space?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
If you knew that Mt. SAC offers interactive courses via on-line computers via the Internet, how likely would you be to enroll in a class?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Include any **additional comments or recommendations** for improving the programs or services offered by the College or for building stronger community relationships by the College, (if you need more space, please use a separate sheet of paper):

_____

_____

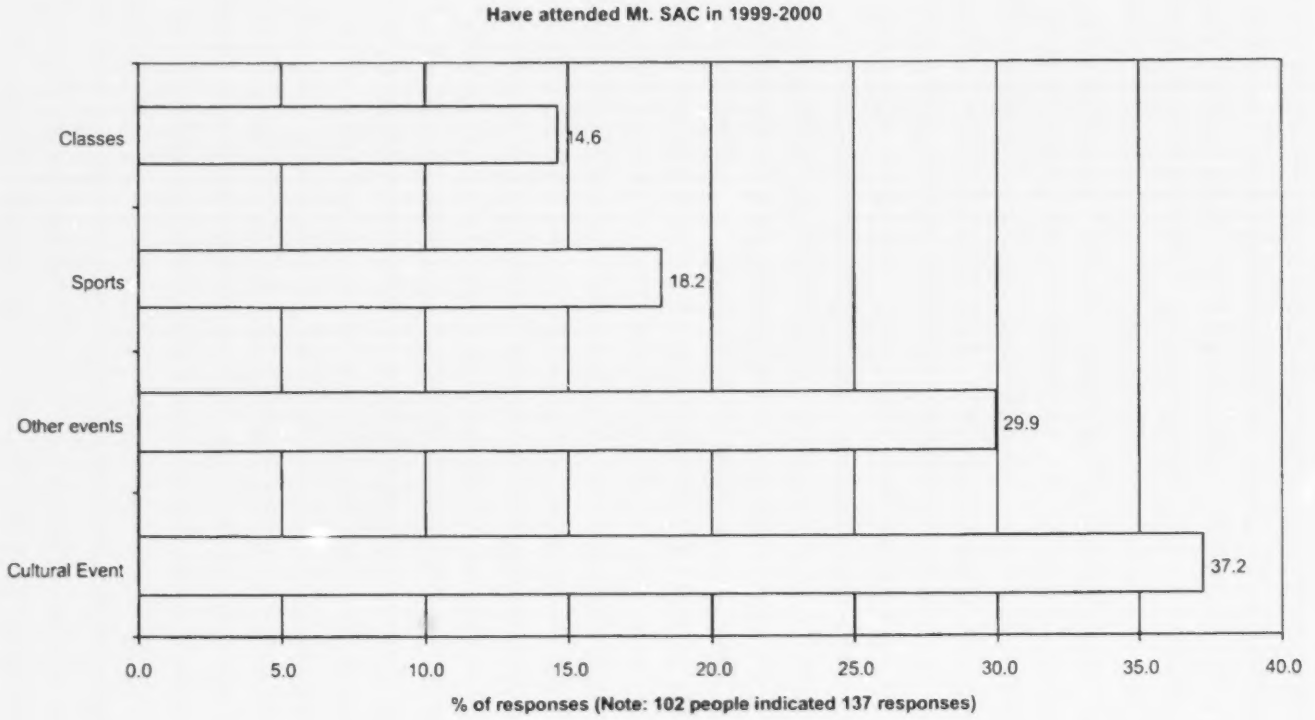
_____

Thank you for completing this survey.

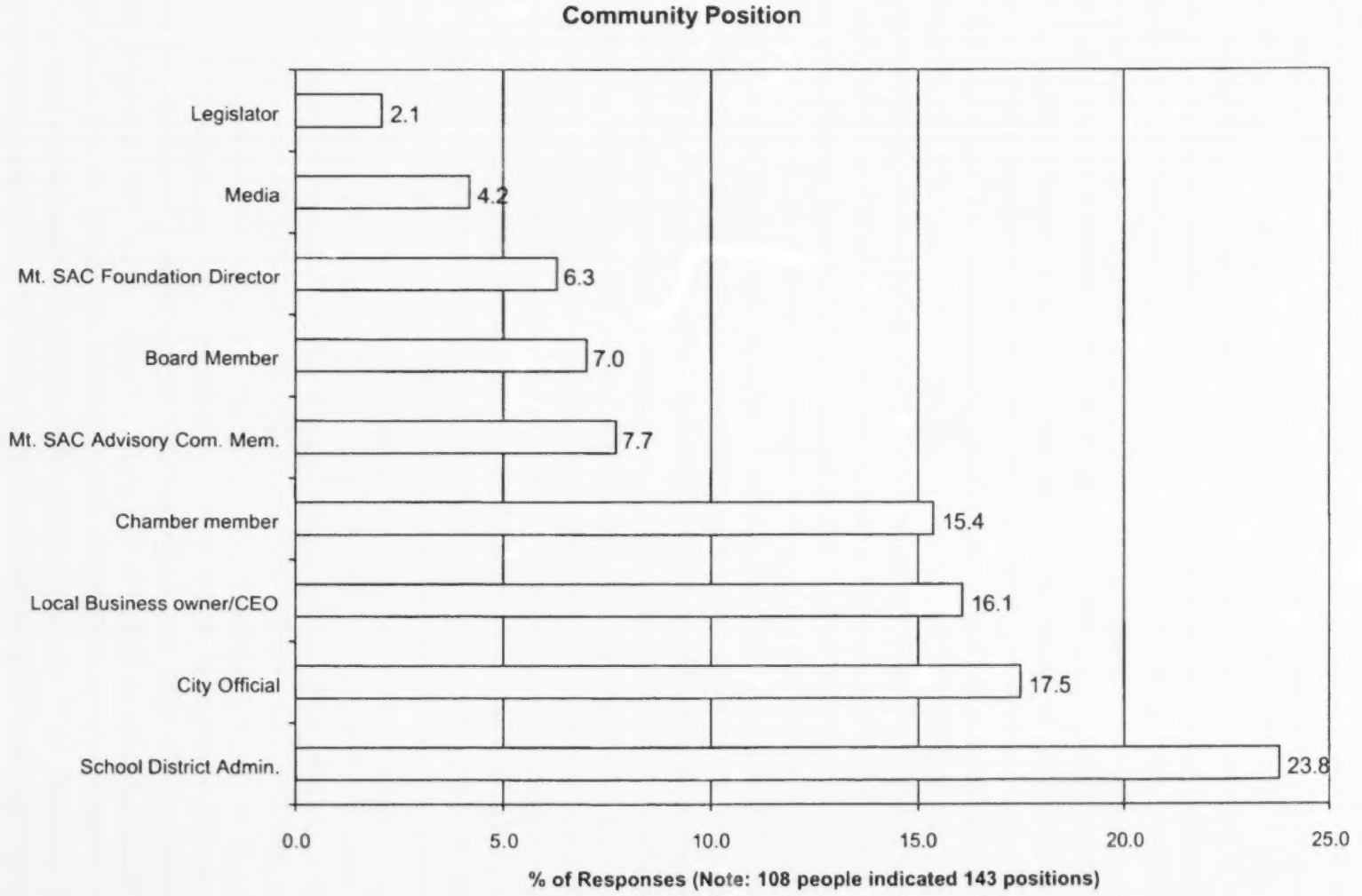
Please return the survey in the envelope provided by April 12, 2001. Thank you for your time and assistance.

_____

Appendix B: Respondents visited the campus in 1999-2000 to attend an event or class.



Appendix C: Survey Demographic: Community positions held by respondents



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